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AUTHOR Force, Doug; Schallhorn, Paula
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an approach to transitioning 106 junior high special education students into mainstream settings by drawing regular education teachers into special education settings for regular instruction sessions prior to full mainstreaming. Following a 3-5 week period of instructional visits by regular teachers to special education classes, students to be mainstreamed were brought to the regular classroom for 2-4 weeks of instruction in the new setting without the presence of regular education students, after which regular education students were brought in for achievement of full mainstreaming. Cognitive, academic and affective pre- and post-test ratings for participating special education students showed significant increases in all areas studied. These results are attributed to the reduction in stress resulting from gradual change of individual environmental factors leading up to full mainstreaming. (PB)

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REVERSE MAINSTREAMING
A TEAM-TEACHING MODEL FOR INTEGRATIVE EDUCATION

By Doug Force and Paula Schallhorn
McLoughlin Junior High School
North Clackamas School District
Milwaukie, Oregon

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THE PROBLEM

At an Elliot Merenbloom inservice on developing teaching teams, Elliot addressed the fact that change causes stress and that most often the stress has negative effects on all the people in the changing educative environment. My mind began to drift at that point. I considered how teachers coped with change, how administrators coped with change, and, finally, how my middle school students coped with change. Generally, we all had a miserable time!

Of all the "groups" of middle school kids I began to consider, it was the learning disabled kids for whom I began to feel the most compassion . They seemed to be the 'worst case' scenario. Special education kids had to cope with "mainstreaming", leaving the "safety" of a contained classroom, the familiarity of one teacher who is specially trained to work with the different needs of the students, the security of a small class size, and the established rapport of other students who are at about the same skill level as each other, and generally clear teacher expectations.

It seemed no wonder that they appeared "apprehensive" when "mainstreamed" into my geography class. They had to face a new and huge classroom, new students of varying skills *("but, all much more advanced than mine"* - so they think), radically different teacher expectations that often went unstated, changing teaching styles and evaluating procedures. This, compiled with crushing self-image issues, negative experiences in similar settings in the past, the learning disabilities they were trying to cope with, and the instructor who had no information or training to assist the student, was devastating. It seemed a tribute to this group of students that they survived the "mainstreaming" process at all.

"So," thought I, coming away from this image, *"what can be done for these kids?" "Why not work out a methodology that would team a 'regular' teacher and the special education teacher to facilitate a smoother transition. Perhaps a step-by-step approach that would introduce one change at a time for the students as well as teachers."*

To me, a logical step would be to allow the special education students to remain with their special education teacher and introduce the "regular" teacher to that supportive environment, effectively "mainstreaming" the teacher first instead of the students!

A SOLUTION

In the Spring of 1991, Paula Schallhorn, one of our special education teachers, and I agreed to conduct a team-teaching project involving her students and the simple adaptation of having the "regular" teacher come to the special needs students. Instead of "mainstreaming" the students, we would "reverse mainstream" the regular teacher. We agreed to follow Merenbloom's teaming model religiously and designed a three-phase methodology. We wanted students to experience change in a gradual process, introducing changes one at a time. We also agreed to do only the first phase, take data on both cognitive and attitudinal changes in Paula's class, and stop after a lengthy test of Phase One (see following page) to evaluate and share our data with appropriate audiences.

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The phases of the teaming project are as follows:

Phase I
Regular teacher goes to special ed. class to teach discipline subject to special ed. students in their room. Cognitive and affective growth charted. Regular ed. teacher goes twice a week for 3-5 weeks during common block of time.

Phase II
Special ed students and teacher go to regular ed. teacher's classroom for instruction. Regular ed. students not present to allow special ed. students to adjust to new environment. Class taught twice a week for 2-4 weeks in this manner.

Phase III
Special ed. and regular ed. students all taught together. During this phase, team teaching by both teachers as "equal partners" begins and develops. This phase completes the "reverse mainstream" to "mainstreamed" special ed. students. Data taken over 3 week period.

THE BENEFITS

For students:

1. Their self-esteem rose immediately, due to the caring displayed by the committment of the teachers.
2. They received the support of the special ed. teacher while working with a "guest" teacher.
3. The students were in a familiar learning environment, learning with familiar styles.
4. They enjoyed having a "different" approach to learning a "new" topic.
5. The students got to know a "new" teacher on a long term basis, slowly and with help from the teacher.

For teachers:

1. The teachers cooperatively planned lessons.
2. The discipline teacher was able to get background information on each student well before he/she entered the classroom.
3. Implementation of lessons could be done jointly, developing, using and sharing techniques that worked.
4. Data could be taken and shared on specifics in the classroom.
5. From our "action research" we could then design changes and evaluate test results almost immediately.
6. We were able to share and reinforce each other professionally and enjoy the strengths and flexibility of each other. We also found a continual excitement in the daily discoveries we made.
7. We learned a ton of strategies, plans and techniques from each other.

For administrators:

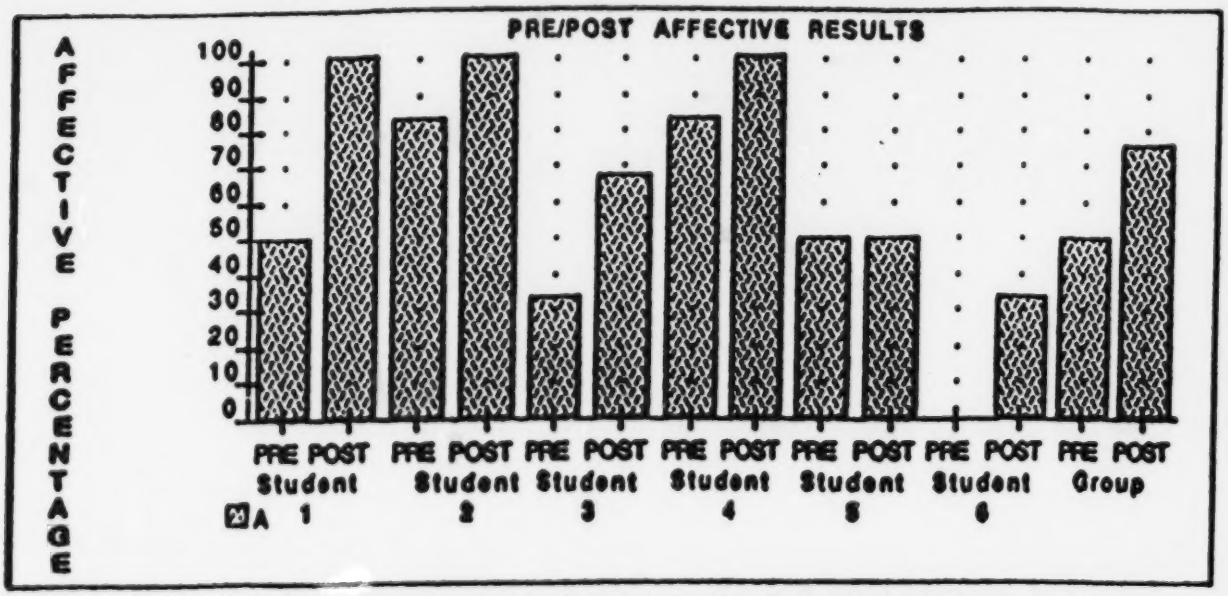
1. The teachers are intrinsically motivated to conduct meaningful "staff development" for themselves.
2. They become really excited about their role and begin to see how effective their efforts can be and where they can implement changes for their students to succeed.
3. The time we got to work together gave us a richer appreciation for the complexity of a modern school.
4. It gave our administrator a firm basis to evaluate and measure our growth as professionals in education.
5. It tremendously enhanced community relations with a very hard-pressed group of moms and dads who really needed to know that we care about their kids as a professional group, *all teachers*, not just the special education folks.

THE RESULTS

The Spring of '91 results showed us that students raised their cognitive scores on a variety of geography work an average 32.5%. Perhaps even more heartening was the positive affective/attitudinal change measured at 29%! This led us to want to test phases two and three, even though we felt we had succeeded beyond our wildest dreams.

In the Fall of 1991, with the help of our principal and time for curriculum development and research into accessment models, we decided to continue the project and see if the second parts were as valid as the first. We'd been asked to develop some refined affective assessment tools, and chose a combination of instruments to collect data. These included teacher developed criteria using Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: Affective Domain (Drathwohl, Bloom, and Masia); The Quality of School Life Scale (Epstein and McPartland); Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale (Nowicki, Strickland); and Learning Style Inventory (Dunn, Dunn, and Price). These measures gave us specific information to monitor and adjust to meet student needs and promote growth in the affective domain. Our teacher-developed affective behavior instrument showed a growth of 25% in receiving and responding behavior demonstrated on the pre and post assessments. We have included a graph which displays both individual and group results of the the teacher developed affective behavior instrument on the participating special education students.

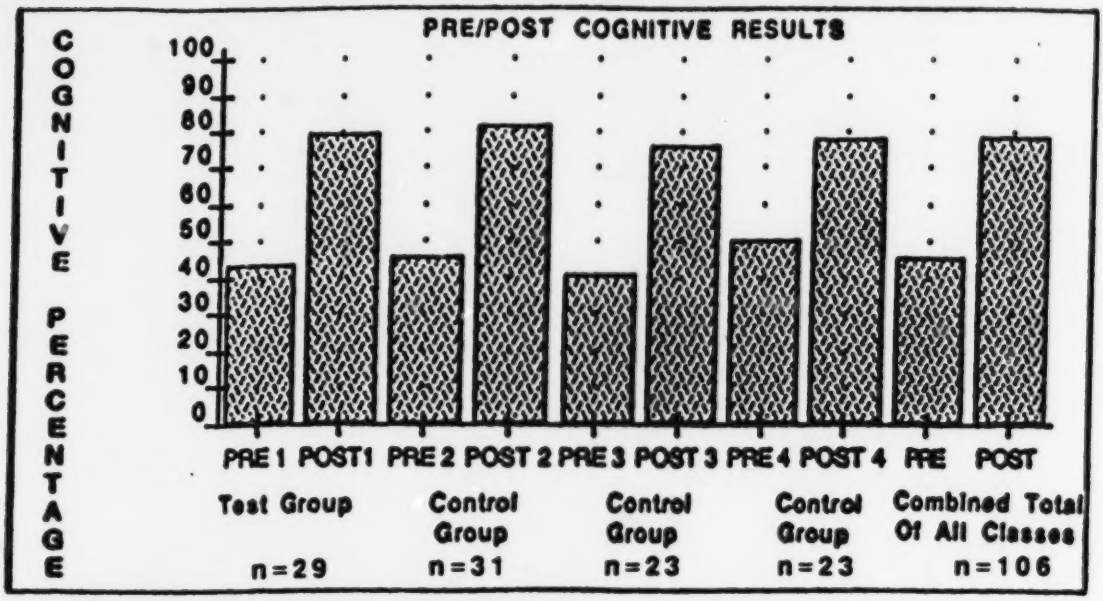
SPECIAL EDUCATION TEST GROUP DATA (BY STUDENT)



This graph indicates the assessed changes in the individual students in the test group, based on our teacher developed instruments. Note, that student 6 was unwilling to take the pre-observation assessment. After participating, however, this student felt more than willing to do the assessment.

To measure cognitive development, Paula and I devised pre/post tests for the units that were already in place for our current curriculum in geography. The following is a compilation of our results: regular education classes showed a growth rate range of 27% to 36%, while the combined special/regular education class average growth rate was 36%. The graph below shows group result comparisons as a percentage for the regular classes, combined special/regular class, and average for all groups in our study.

CHANGES IN COGNITIVE SCORES (BY CLASS GROUP)



n=number of students in each group

RECOMMENDATIONS

Paula and I, as professional educators, are convinced that our project clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of "Reverse Mainstreaming." We believe the cognitive and affective benefits can be accrued for both regular and special education students. We are sold on the team teaching model we used in our project because of the intrinsic professional benefits we've received, as well as the joy in sharing we've experienced.

By making one change at a time, we feel a student's transition from a self-contained classroom to regular classes can be a much smoother and positive process. We feel this is easily adaptable to a number of school structures and schedules, because of the often small numbers of students and teachers involved.

The "one change at a time" concept for students is the key to success for these kids. The orientation must be on helping students make a slow, orderly transition, if any transition to a "mainstream" classroom is to be made successfully. This program was designed with the students' needs foremost in our minds, therefore, we've sublimated teachers' and administrators' "needs" and we feel the focus has added a new dimension of flexibility for all parties concerned.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it's been exciting, fun, interesting, and "user friendly" for students, teachers, and administrators alike. It has been one of those rare experiences when everyone has gained, and no one has had to "lose." It has been work, but that's to be expected. The bonus is that it has been meaningful, enjoyable work.

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